

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF MINES
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No.1698
ANSWERED ON 04.08.2025

EXPLORATION AND AUCTION PROCESS FOR CRITICAL MINERALS

1698. SHRI JOSE K. MANI:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

- (a) the current status of the country's exploration and auction process for critical minerals;
- (b) whether there is a dedicated institutional framework proposed for critical minerals exploration and recycling; and
- (c) the measures taken to promote responsible mining practices, community consent, and benefit-sharing in mineral-rich areas?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF COAL AND MINES
(SHRI G. KISHAN REDDY)

(a): The Geological Survey of India (GSI), an attached office of the Ministry of Mines has prioritized and intensified the exploration of critical and strategic minerals listed in Part D of First Schedule to the Mines and Minerals Development and Regulations (MMDR) Amendment Act, 2023. GSI carried out 628 mineral exploration projects on various critical and strategic minerals across the country from field season 2020-21 to 2024-25. During the current field season 2025-26, 230 mineral exploration projects have been taken up by GSI for critical minerals across the country. In addition, GSI has also launched a 'Critical Mineral Assessment Programme' (CMAP) in 2024-25 to target the secondary enrichment zones of Critical Minerals on a nationwide scale. Till date, GSI has taken up 27 CMAPs in different parts of the country.

Further, in order boost exploration of critical minerals, National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET) also provides funding support to Notified Exploration Agencies and Notified Private Exploration Agencies. So far, NMET has sanctioned 196 projects of critical and strategic minerals amounting to Rs 575 crores.

As regards the auction process for critical minerals, the MMDR Amendment Act, 2023 has empowered the Central Government to exclusively auction critical and strategic minerals like lithium, cobalt, and rare earth elements etc. and till date, 34 critical and strategic mineral blocks have been successfully auctioned.

(b): GSI as per its annual field season programme undertakes mineral exploration activities, including critical minerals, in the country with an aim to augment mineral resources in the country. The Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB), an apex body under the

Ministry of Mines, approves GSI's annual field season programme after detailed deliberations with the State Geology and Mining departments and Central Government institutions.

Further, National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET) has been established by the Government in 2015 with the primary objective to expedite mineral exploration across the country. NMET funds various mineral exploration projects, including critical minerals projects, in the country.

Furthermore, the National Geoscience Data Repository (NGDR), a cloud-based portal has been created to expedite and facilitate mineral exploration coverage of the country by hosting all baseline and exploration-related geoscientific data in a single GIS platform, making it available to all the stakeholders. GSI is the nodal agency for NGDR portal and it is funded by National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET).

In addition to the above, the Government has also launched National Critical Mineral Mission in January, 2025 with an aim to secure a long-term sustainable supply of critical minerals and strengthen country's critical mineral value chains encompassing all stages from mineral exploration and mining to beneficiation, processing and recycling through recovery from end-of-life products. The Ministry of Mines under its S&T programme also funds Research and Development projects in critical and strategic minerals processing.

(c): The Government has implemented several initiatives to promote sustainable development, community involvement, and equitable benefit-sharing in mineral-rich regions.

The introduction of the Star Rating of Mines under Sustainable Development Framework (SDF) ensures environmentally and socially responsible mining practices. It assesses environmental management, social responsibility, scientific mining, and post-closure land use. Mines achieving higher ratings, especially 5-star, are recognized for excellence and encouraged to adopt best practices. This system fosters transparency, boosts community trust, and promotes responsible mining. Environmental and social impact assessments are mandated to identify and mitigate adverse effects on local populations.

The District Mineral Foundations (DMFs) established under the MMDR Amendment Act, 2015, channels a portion of mining revenues into local development projects focusing on health, education, drinking water, and livelihood generation. The Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY) further guides DMF spending to ensure welfare of mining-affected populations.
